



By the King, A PROCLAMATION, For Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness.

WILLIAM R.

Whereas We cannot but be deeply sensible of the great Goodness and mercy of Almighty God, in putting an End to a Long, Bloody and Expensive War, by the Conclusion of an Honourable Peace, so We are not less touched with a Resentment, that notwithstanding this and many other great Blessings and Deliverances, Impiety, Prophaneness and Immorality do still abound in this Our Kingdom: And whereas nothing can prove a greater Dishonour to a well ordered Government, where the Christian Faith is Professed, nor is likelier to provoke God to withdraw His Mercy and Blessings from Us, and instead thereof, to inflict heavy and severe Judgments upon this Kingdom, than the open and avowed Practice of Vice, Immorality and Prophaneness, which amongst many Men has too much prevailed in this Our Kingdom of late Years, to the high Displeasure of Almighty God, the great Scandal of Christianity, and the ill and fatal Example of the rest of Our Loving Subjects, who have been Soberly Educated, and whose Inclinations would lead them to the Exercise of Piety and Virtue, did they not daily find such frequent and repeated Instances of Dissolute Living, Prophaneness and Impiety, which has in a great Measure been occasioned by the Neglect of the Magistrates not putting in Execution those good Laws which have been made for Suppressing and Punishing thereof, and by the ill Example of many in Authority, to the great Dishonour of God, and Reproach of our Religion: Wherefore, and for that We cannot expect Increase or Continuance of the Blessings We and Our Subjects Enjoy, without Providing Remedies to prevent the like evils for the future, We think Our Selves bound by the Duty We owe to God, and the Care We have of the People committed to Our Charge, to proceed in taking effectual Course, that Religion, Piety and Good Manners may, according to Our hearty Desire, flourish and Increase under Our Administration and Government; and being thereunto moved by the Pious Address of the Commons in Parliament Assembled, We have thought fit, by the Advice of Our Privy Council, to Issue this Our Royal Proclamation, and do Declare Our Royal Purpose and Resolution to Discountenance and Punish all manner of Vice, Immorality and Prophaneness in all Persons from the highest to the lowest Degree within this Our Realm, and particularly in such who are Employed near Our Royal Person; and that for the greater Encouragement of Religion and Morality, We will, upon all Occasions, Distinguish Men of Piety and Virtue by Marks of Our Royal Favour. And We do expect that all Persons of Honour, or in Place of Authority, will to their utmost contribute to the Discountenancing Men of Dissolute and Debauched Lives, that they being reduced to Shame and Contempt, may be enforced the sooner to Reform their ill Habits and Practices, that the Displeasure of Good Men towards them, may supply what the Laws (it may be) cannot wholly prevent. And for the more Effectual Reforming these Men, who are a Discredit to Our Kingdom, Our further Pleasure is, and We do hereby strictly Charge and Command all Our Judges, Mayors, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and all other Our Officers and Ministers, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, and other Our Subjects, whom it may Concern, to be very Vigilant and Strict in the Discovery and the Effectual Prosecution and Punishment of all Persons who shall be Guilty of Excessive Drinking, Blasphemy, Prophane Swearing and Cursing, Lewdness, Prophanation of the Lord's Day, or other Dissolute, Immoral or Disorderly Practices, as they will answer it to Almighty God, and upon Pain of Our highest Displeasure. And for the more Effectual Proceedings herein, We do hereby Direct and Command Our Judges of Assizes and Justices of Peace, to give strict Charges at the respective Assizes and Sessions, for the due Prosecution and Punishment of all Persons that shall presume to offend in any the Kinds aforesaid, and also of all Persons that, contrary to their Duty, shall be Remiss or Negligent in Putting the said Laws in Execution, and that they do at their respective Assizes and Quarter Sessions of the Peace, cause this Our Proclamation to be publickly Read in Open Court immediately before the Charge is given. And We do hereby further Charge and Command every Minister in his respective Parish or Chapel, to Read or cause to be Read this Our Proclamation, at least Four times in every Year, immediately after Divine Service, and to incite and stir up their respective Auditories to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, and the Avoiding of all Immorality and Prophaneness. And to the end that all Vice and Debauchery may be Prevented, and Religion and Virtue Practised by all Officers, Private Soldiers, Mariners or others, who are Employed in Our Service, either by Sea or Land, We do hereby strictly Charge and Command all Our Commanders and Officers whatsoever, That they do take Care to Avoid all Prophaneness, Debauchery and other Immoralities, and that by the Piety and Virtue of their own Lives and Conversations they do set good Examples to all such as are under their Authority, and likewise to take Care and Inspect the Behaviour and Manners of all such as are under them, and to Punish all those who shall be Guilty of any the Offences aforesaid. And whereas several Wicked and Prophane Persons have presumed to Print and Publish several Pernicious Books and Pamphlets, which contain in them Impious Doctrines against the Holy Trinity and other Fundamental Articles of Our Faith, tending to the Subversion of the Christian Religion, therefore for the Punishing the Authors and Publishers thereof, and for the Preventing such Impious Books and Pamphlets being Published or Printed for the future, We do hereby strictly Charge and Prohibit all Persons that they do not presume to Write, Print or Publish any such Pernicious Books or Pamphlets, under the Pain of Incurring Our high Displeasure, and of being Punished according to the utmost Severity of the Law. And We do hereby strictly Charge and Require all Our Loving Subjects to Discover and Apprehend such Person and Persons whom they shall know to be the Authors or Publishers of any such Books or Pamphlets, and to bring them before some Justice of Peace or Chief Magistrate, in order that they may be Proceeded against according to Law.

Given at Our Court at Kensington the Four and twentieth Day of February, 1697. In the Tenth Year of Our Reign.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

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